KILLING THE KENNEDYS

THE CASE FOR CONSPIRACY!

By F. PETER MODEL

He's older now, paunchier, goateed and turtlenecked. No longer is he the same lawyer who stood before a blue-ribbon, bi-partisan court of inquiry headed by the Chief Justice of the United States and six other impeccably-credentialed Americans, and represented Mrs. Marguerite Oswald in casting doubts on the guilt of her late son—Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States.

Actually, Mark Lane didn't succeed until a year after Oswald's guilty verdict came down, and long after Oswald had been killed by Dallas stripjoint proprietor Jack Ruby in the Dallas jail house. It was then that Lane's book, "Rush to Judgment," came out, and started a movement. Only the movement is just *now* beginning to move, eleven years later.

1 Presidential limousine emerges from behind road sign.

2 JFK, already hit by the first bullet, begins to react.

3 Kennedy's right hand jumps toward his throat.

4 Governor Connally is struck in the back by a bullet.

5 Connally's right shoulder drops, and his cheeks puff out.

6 Both men continue to react to their wounds.

7 JFK slumps toward his wife as she grabs his left arm.

8 The fatal head shot catches JFK as he's slumped forward.

9 Massive pieces of his skull gone. JFK's head starts back.

10 The President's head is already driven up and back.

11 The motion continues here at 100.3 feet per second.

12 JFK's head and torso are at rear-most position.

COURTESY OF ROBERT GRODEN

Back in 1964, most Americans wanted desperately to believe the official report of The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy. Now they can't. Back in 1964 they still revered the Commission's two investigatory arms, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency. Now they don't.

As Mark Lane says, "It's no longer a question of convincing people that the Warren Commission Report was a fraud. They know that. They're now ready to believe almost any explanation, however crazy, just as long as it doesn't come from the government."

What is known is that most Americans want to go back to the beginning, to Dealey Plaza in Dallas at 12:31 C.S.T. on November 22, 1963.

"The Zapruder film," says Lane. "Just look at the film. It's all there. The entire story of what really happened."

Reversed Film Frames

The Zapruder film is a 17-foot-long strip of color home movie film, lasting 22 seconds. It was shot by a Dallas dress manufacturer, the late Abraham Zapruder, while the presidential motorcade was coming down Elm Street, heading for the triple underpass that would take it onto the Stemmons Freeway and from there to the Dallas Trade Mart. Mr. Zapruder saw it all. So did his 8-mm. Bell & Howell camera, and after the FBI

looked at it, Time Incorporated snatched it up for $150,000 and recently sold it back to Zapruder's son for $1.

Actually, more people have seen the film than even Time Incorporated suspects. A few years ago person(s) unknown walked out of the *Time* photo labs with a bootleg copy of the original and proceeded to improve it. To eliminate the jerkiness of the amateur film, they blew up each and every frame on the entire strip and, in effect, created a new Zapruder film—the film Abe Zapruder would have shot had he come with tripod and zoom lens.

What they saw made their hair stand on edge: John F. Kennedy's head blown off by what looks like *two* shots, one from the back (as the Warren Commission had long insisted) and one that came from the front (which it denied). And no wonder. In comparing their film with prints of the film the Commission saw, a film technician realized that (a) the Commission's film was not a copy of the original but a copy of a copy (a fact recently confirmed by former Commission staff lawyer Arlen Specter), (b) that at least 10 crucial frames were missing, and (c) that the most important sequence of the film, in which Kennedy receives the fatal shot(s), was printed *in reverse* in the Warren Report—leaving the Commission no choice but to conclude that if Kennedy's head had snapped forward, then he must have been shot from the back. By the time J. Edgar Hoover, the late FBI chief, ruefully explained the reverse was due to a "printing error"—the verdict was already in.

To understand the dazzling importance of this sliver of film, you have to talk with Robert Groden, a 29-year-old free-lance optics specialist. Bob Groden has lived with the Kennedy assassination since November 22, 1963. It was his 18th birthday, and the Zapruder film has been his life's work ever since.

No film is as important to history as this 17-foot piece, running at 18.43 frames per second, while the motorcade traveled exactly 137 feet and 6 inches at precisely 11.67 m.p.h. Groden says "it provides absolute, incontestable proof of crossfire and conspiracy."

According to the Warren Commission, Lee Harvey Oswald, perched in a home-made sniper's nest made of packing boxes on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, fired his first shot sometime between frame Z210 and Z224—15 frames or less than a second—during which Kennedy was obscured from Zapruder's camera by a large road sign, and from which we see him emerge, starting to clutch his throat.

The second shot, the Commission said, was a miss that hit the curb, causing a concrete chip to fly off and wound a spectator. The third shot was the fatal head shot.

The Commission insisted that the righthanded Oswald, with a sluggish, bolt-action, single-shot World War II surplus, Italian-made Mannlicher-Carcano 6.5 mm. rifle, with a left-handed scope ordered from a Chicago mail-order house, killed a President and wounded a Governor (John B. Connally of Texas) with three rapid shots in succession.

The bullet hole in President Kennedy's shirt indicates that he was hit inches lower than the Warren Commission said.

FBI sharpshooters who tried to duplicate this feat said that the fastest possible time in which they could get three shots off, without aiming, was 4.6 seconds. The problem is that the fastest Oswald's gun could have fired *two shots* is 2.3 seconds. Yet, according to Groden's analysis of the Zapruder film, the time lapse between the moment Kennedy is hit and Conally is hit is only 1.8 seconds—too long for it to have been one shot and not enough time for it to have been two shots from the same rifle. However, the Commission went ahead and postulated that the first shot wounded both Kennedy and Connally at the same time, ignoring the fact that the bullet would have had to linger in the air for 1.8 seconds!

The "Magic Bullet"

Now, about that first shot, and what the conspiracy buffs now call "the magic bullet." On the record, it's Commission Exhibit (CE) 399.

The Commission would have us believe that this single bullet (a) struck Kennedy in the back of the neck, (b) exited his throat (nicking the left side of his necktie), (c) hovered in the air for 1.8 seconds and then, (d) with sharp, angular deviation, flew on towards Connally, who sat directly in front of Kennedy, and who at that precise moment was turning around to see what was causing the commotion. Next, (e) the bullet entered Connally's back near the right armpit, smashed his fifth rib and (f) the inside of his right wrist, (g) burrowed into his left thigh and then (h) worked its way out of Connally to be discovered, hours later, in near-pristine condition lying on a stretcher at Parkland General Hospital, where the dying President and the wounded Governor had been rushed. Even more astounding, having inflicted this awesome damage, the bullet—which weighed 161.5 grams new—lost only 2.5 grams or 1.5 percent substance.

Why such a preposterous theory to begin with? As former Warren Commission lawyer Arlen Specter recently explained on nighttime TV, "Since the bullet in Kennedy's throat wasn't found in the car we simply assumed it must have been the same one that lodged in Connally and came out."

A more official explanation is the FBI's belief that from Oswald's perch Kennedy would first have become visible from frame Z207 to Z234 (when Connally is shown being hit), and since this clearly wasn't enough time in which to get off *two* shots it must have been one. A second shot in that narrow a time span would have meant a second gunman, and that would have meant conspiracy.

According to the Zapruder film, Kennedy is shown hit by frame Z224, so Connally—hit at frame Z234—must have been wounded at least half a second later. To account for that oddity, the Commission said that a bullet victim often doesn't react instantaneously to a hit; obviously, no Commission member has ever had a bullet shatter his rib. Of course what it ig-

nored was that if Kennedy were indeed shot from the sixth floor rear, the bullet would have entered right to left—given the direction and angle of the car—and thus missed Connally altogether.

According to the Parkland emergency surgeons, as well as the autopsy surgeons at Bethesda Naval Hospital, the hole in the front of Kennedy's throat was six inches *higher* than the "entrance wound" in back.

Further undermining the single bullet conclusion, Groden runs the film back to frames Z155 to Z157—the exact moment at which witnesses told the Commission they heard "backfire" and "firecrackers." Kennedy appears unhurt, but he abruptly stops waving and looks to the right, and then starts waving again until Z188. When Kennedy stops waving at Z188, it's because he's probably heard a bullet—a real one. The one that hit the curb, the one the Commission says was the first shot.

The film rolls on until Z207. Groden stops. He points to a splice mark—and now enlarges that frame, so we see a tree in the top half of the picture to the right, while on the bottom of that frame, the tree is in the middle. It's a sloppy editing job, but terribly significant to the puzzle because, as Groden points out, to get that tree to move that rapidly would mean *removing* frames Z208, 209, 210 and 211.

Why would anybody do that? Groden was curious and asked Time Incorporated. They explained that in transposing Zapruder's original 8-mm to 35-mm film in 1963, an inexperienced lab technician may have inadvertently damaged the film.

Interesting. For Oswald to have gotten off rounds two and three by the time Kennedy's head is blown off in Z313, the Commission would have had to have Kennedy get hit by the first shot as soon as possible in the Zapruder film. "If it weren't for that oak tree and Zapruder's film," says Groden, "they might have succeeded. But because of that tree, they had to concede the first shot came as late as Z210." But since Kennedy is viewed, apparently unhurt at Z210, he cannot yet have been shot—unless, of course, the hit registers a few frames thereafter. By now, he is obscured by that road sign. When we next see him emerge, at Z223, he is concluding his wave and hasn't yet clutched his throat. That happens two frames later, at Z225.

Now, at Z227, a second shot—this one penetrating the back, just right of the spinal column—reaches its target.

Connally has turned around. Seven frames after Z227, his cheeks puff out as a bullet knocks the wind out of him.

And now, the crucial shots strike Kennedy on the skull. Kennedy, his body held rigid by his back brace—is hurled violently back and sidewards against Jacqueline with such force that it literally lifts him out of his seat. The impact knocks him back at 100.3 m.p.h.

Jacqueline Kennedy later told the Warren Commission: "I was trying to hold his hair on. But from the *front* there was nothing. I suppose there must have been. But from the back you could see, you know, you were trying to hold his hair on and his skull on. . ."

Usually, a head, hit from the rear, moves forward; a head hit from the front, moves backwards. A head hit from the front and side, moves backwards and sidewards.

Can we be positive? No we cannot. But there's another piece of film that can be viewed as corroborating evidence: the footage recorded on the other side of Elm, almost diagonally across from where Abe Zapruder stood. It was another 8-mm film, taken by a bystander named Orville Nix. Now the property of UPI, it too went through "image enhancement," and what it shows is a lot of people throwing themselves down on the grassy knoll, as if to get out of the line of fire, and at least one motorcycle cop, splattered by brain matter, dismounting and running up the slope toward what he assumes to be the sound of the fired gun, his own weapon drawn.

What *really* happened? Where did the shots come from? How many assassins were there? If there were a plot who organized it? Financed it? Executed it? And why?

CIA Involvement?

There is, after all, something positively gnawing in the cryptic remark made by defrocked CIA spook James Jesus Angelton when asked if the CIA was "involved" in the Dallas killing. A veteran of "The Company's" lethal services branch, Angelton, in a line that might have sprung from the pen of a British spy novelist, said: "There were many rooms in the mansion. I was not privy to who struck John."

"*Who struck John ?*"

Who *would* strike John?

Kennedy entered the Oval Office with more enemies than one might possibly imagine. And he built on them. Before the legendary Thousand Days were up, he and his brother Robert managed to alienate some of the most powerful pressure blocs in the country.

While Bob Kennedy waged a war against crime with his Justice Department Organized Crime Strike Forces, his brother Jack took on the so-called "military-industrial complex" with as much zest as he encouraged Defense

If you look carefully, you can see the President through the front windshield of the limousine as he is hit by a bullet and begins to react (Mrs. Kennedy's gloved hand is seen supporting his left arm).

Secretary Robert S. McNamara to reassert civilian control over the generals in the Pentagon. He let it be known that he favored *détente* with the Russians, engineered the first workable nuclear test ban treaty, called for an end to the (then) 27.5 percent oil depletion allowance, and in the third year of his reign, indicated that he would do what Nixon eventually did do—open the door to Red China. And to make matters even worse, he decided sometime in mid-1963 that sending 15,000 "advisors" to Vietnam hadn't been such a good idea after all, and ordered the first 1,000 back by Christmas.

But in hindsight of what we've since learned, no one power bloc might have loomed as large a nemesis as that of the Syndicate. Before Fidel Castro toppled Cuban strongman Fulgencio Batista on New Year's Day of 1959, Havana was the Syndicate's fiefdom: more than just a tourist mecca, it was the base for heroin shipments to the U.S. As long as Fidel was in power, the mob stood to lose a lot of money. As far as they were concerned, Castro had to go.

It now turns out that as early as 1959, Frank Angelo Fiorini, a one-time Syndicate employee in Havana, born in Norfolk, Virginia, a former U.S. Marine and Haganah mercenary during the first (1948) Israeli-Arab war, approached the CIA with a scheme to "hit" not just Fidel Castro, but also his brother Raul and theoretician Chè Guevara. Fiorini—better known today as Frank A. Sturgis of Watergate fame—had joined Castro back in 1957 in the Sierra Maestre, largely at the urging of former Cuban president Carlos Prio Socarrás, who'd been overthrown by Batista in 1948. Fiorini had insinuated himself into the Castro brothers' confidence and told the CIA he was in a perfect position to do the job right.

We don't know what the CIA's response was at the time, but from Fiorini's recent published confessions, we're told that if the CIA wasn't interested, the mob was going to go ahead: they offered him at least $100,000 to kill Castro. Possibly the reason he didn't was that he had by now become a CIA contract agent.

The next thing we learn, the assassination of Castro becomes an integral part of the invasion plans. The idea is not just to hit the beaches of Playa Giron and march on Havana, but to take out El Lidre before he can rally his 20,000-man militia.

Meanwhile, in those secret jungle camps down in Nicaragua and Guatamala, the CIA continued training up to 2,000 "free" Cubans—including some of the very same boys who, in 1972, were at the Watergate: people like Virgilio R. Gonzales, Eugenio R. Martinez, Felipe deDiego, Bernard Barker, and our friend Fiorini-Sturgis. Their superior officer was an American known only as "Eduardo"—E. Howard Hunt.

Shortly after Kennedy's inauguration, the CIA confronted the new President with what was essentially a *fait accompli:* a complete invasion "package" consisting of a landing by 1,500 men, pre-invasion air cover by the U.S. Navy, and the Castro assassination. Kennedy vetoed the air cover but did allow the CIA to send up two obsolete B-25 bombers with Cuban markings to bomb the Havana airport; he also strictly forbade the Castro killing.

"Eduardo," of course, never bothered to inform the "free" Cubans of Kennedy's hardnosed position. And because the two B-26 bombers had missed knocking out Castro's T-33 jet fighters on the ground, the April 17-20 Bay of Pigs invasion was a disaster from start to finish. The stragglers felt Kennedy had betrayed them; so did the mob and many within the CIA.

Badly burned by the disaster, and angry at his "advisers," Kennedy vowed he would "break the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it." He sent the FBI and Secret Service in to break up new CIA training camps in Louisiana and Florida. Possibly at this point, some within the CIA as well as those in Cuba remembered the mob's interest and willingness to kill Castro, because in 1972, a CIA-organized hit team was sent on to Havana—and was caught.

Possibly for this reason, a few assassinologists keep coming back to "that Cuban connection" in four shootings.

- Consider Lee Harvey Oswald and his one-man New Orleans chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee—whose address, curiously, was the same as that of the violently anti-Castro, E. Howard Hunt-managed Cuban Revolutionary Council.
- Consider the admission by Dr. King's accused slayer, James Earl Ray, that a "blond Latin" named Raoul gave him a new ID and money in exchange for running guns down to some Cubans in Memphis and New Orleans.
- Consider the recent revelation that the man who may have actually killed Senator Kennedy in Los Angeles was not Sirhan but a private security guard of possible Cuban extraction.
- And consider, too, that within 30 minutes after news of Gov. Wallace's shooting had reached the White House, Charles Colson ordered the White House "plumbers"—including the Cubans—to Milwaukee to see

WIDE WORLD

Standing in the doorway of the Texas School Book Depository in the background is a man who bears a startling resemblance to the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. At right is a closeup of that same man.

what they could find in Arthur Bremer's apartment.

In American history, presidential assassinations, successful or attempted, are usually the work of solitary madmen with real or imagined causes. Seldom, if ever, have they been the work of conspiracies. Somehow, in this country, conspiracies are seen as, well, almost decadently European. But here, the murders of Presidents Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley, the attempts on President Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 and that on his cousin FDR in 1933, and even the aborted Puerto Rican coup on Harry S. Truman in 1950, these were all the works of disaffected, alienated men with a stated and oft-publicized reason for their irrational acts.

Yet Oswald, Ray, Sirhan and Bremer were different. They not only proclaimed their innocence but at no time issued the kind of proclamation, manifesto or declaration of intent to account for their madness.

"All four shootings," says Carl Oglesby, an AIB theoretician, "involve a lone, half-mad, disassociated radical fuming in demented solitude, stalking his prey like in some cheap spy thriller. Each assassin has his diary, his secret notes from the underground, and each, so far, has been silent—or in the case of Oswald, has been silenced. Why?"

Professor Richard H. Popkin of Washington University in St. Louis, a charter assassinologist, says: "What bothers me is this 'one-lone-nut' fixation. It's got the strangest damned status in current political thinking. It seems to be an unchallengable axiom that each time a political figure is shot down, one man is supposed to have done it. Forget the evidence. Only politicians can be killed by solitary psychopaths. While the rest of us poor slobs—people like Jock Yablonski, or Joey Gallo—are always shbt by assailants, *plural*. Also, look at the scandals—ITT, Watergate, the Penn Central, nursing homes, the Russian wheat deal. That's OK, they're all conspiracies. But we're supposed to recoil from the possibility that regicide could possibly involve more than one nut. And I think it was to save this mythology that the Warren Commission was created."

Premature Conclusions?

The Warren Commission began with a preconceived conclusion it held to be "In the National Interest." Not only that, the Commission realized, as indeed Lyndon Johnson realized when he set it up, that the story itself would not be half as important as the people who told it. While that's normally the case with Presidential Commissions, it was more so here where not only chairman Earl Warren was a man of unquestionable probity, but where the six other commissioners were household names.

In addition to Earl Warren, Senators Russell of Georgia and Cooper of Kentucky there was, of course, Gerry Ford, Hale Boggs and also former U.S. High Commissioner to Germany and Chase-Manhattan banker John J. McCloy and Allen W. Dulles, the man Kennedy kicked out of the CIA and who now would be a principal in chasing down rumors of his assassination at the hands of, who knows? Russell is dead, as are Boggs, Dulles and Warren; Cooper is the U.S. Ambassador to East Germany, McCloy is back on Wall Street and Ford is, of course, President.

On January 27, 1964, a month or so after being empaneled, the Commission met in session, the minutes of which were held "Top Secret." It was only after assassinologist Harold Weisberg successfully sued the Justice Department under the 1966 Freedom of Information Act that the courts, on June 12 last year, declassified the proceedings.

What the record from those proceedings shows is that the two investigative arms of the Commission withheld vital evidence from the first day.

The session began when General Counsel Lee Rankin told the Commission, "We do have a dirty little rumor that is very bad for the Commission, very bad for the agencies that are involved in it, and it must be wiped out."

That "dirty little rumor" was that Oswald wasn't just an alienated, deranged ex-Marine who'd defected to the Soviet Union, taken a Russian bride and returned to Texas, there to drift from job to job, turn Marxist or pro-Castro, and when nothing seemed to go right, shot the President. But that Oswald was (a) possibly a low-grade CIA operative and/or (b) certainly a $200-per-month FBI informant.

Neither the Commission, already

SHOULD THE R.F.K. CASE BE REOPENED?

Former New York Congressman Allard Lowenstein and Paul Schrade (one of the bystanders shot along with Bob Kennedy) are convinced that the investigation into the late Senator's murder should be reopened. The two men have made the following statement:

"We are very troubled by questions that have arisen during our extensive inquiries into the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy. This is an issue which we raise publicly with great reluctance, and only after more than a year of efforts to get explanations of serious gaps and inconsistencies from the authorities. The three most troubling problems are each separately disturbing. In combination, they are almost overwhelming:

1. How could only eight bullets have caused all the bullet holes found after the shooting stopped?
2. How can the eyewitness testimony about the location of Sirhan and his gun be reconciled with the autopsy report?
3. How can the apparent ballistic differences in the bullets found in Senator Kennedy's neck and William Weisel's stomach be reconciled with the notion that all bullets were fired from the same gun?

"Our concern is not a narrow legal one. Sirhan Sirhan was not an innocent bystander improperly imprisoned. He was in the pantry shooting a .22 revolver at the time in question, and five persons were struck by bullets that he fired. We believe, however, that the health of the Republic depends on finding out the whole truth about events that change its fortunes so profoundly. That is why we had hoped the authorities, confronted with vital questions they could not answer themselves, would have wanted to do everything possible to get to the bottom of the matter.

"That has not been their reaction, however, and we must now take these questions to the public. We believe everyone who becomes aware of the difficulty of squaring the evidence with the official version will join us in insisting that answerable questions be answered honestly, and that scientific evidence be assessed scientifically and impartially.

"In this connection, the following steps could be easily taken, and would help immensely in dealing with serious evidentiary problems:

1. Test fire H53725, the Sirhan gun.
2. Convene an independent group of ballistics experts to conduct a new and full study of the bullet ballistics and wound ballistics, and to study and report on questions which have been raised about both.
3. Administer Neutron Activation Tests to determine the metallic composition of all bullets and fragments of bullets that were recovered.
4. Release (or conduct) a trajectory study to explain how bullets fired from Sirhan's gun could have caused all the bullet damage in the pantry.
5. Release the 10 volumes of the official report of "Special Unit Senator" and permit reasonable access to other important items of evidence.

"In short, facts must be determined free of any dogged pre-commitment to any theory. The circumstances of the Robert Kennedy assassination must be re-examined by disinterested, qualified people. The best way to resolve doubts is to implement immediately the measures we have suggested."

Senator Robert Kennedy lies sprawled on the pantry floor of the Ambassador Hotel, a gunshot victim. Only moments before, he had left the main ballroom where he had celebrated his victory in the California Presidential primary with supporters.

committed to its "lone nut" proposition, nor the FBI, which at that time was broadening its sphere of operation well beyond its assigned purview, could afford to let this "dirty little rumor" live.

Rankin wanted the FBI to deny it, but Dulles insisted that wouldn't be necessary; Hoover had already denied any knowledge of Oswald—although we learn that on June 3, 1960, Hoover had memoed the State Department that an impostor might be using the passport of an American defector named Lee "Henry" Oswald. This, nearly three years before Dallas!

But Dulles was argued down by McCloy, who got the former spy-master to admit, if he were asked under oath whether so-and-so was a CIA agent, whether Dulles would lie. "Oh yes," Dulles answered. A long discussion then followed over how to confront Hoover with the "dirty little rumor" without offending the man or challenging the sanctity of the FBI. Hoover denied the "dirty little rumor," and that was that.

RANKIN: "Part of our difficulty [with the FBI] is that they have no problem. They have decided that it is Oswald who committed the assassination. They have decided that no one else was involved. They have decided. . .

RUSSELL: (interrupting) ". . . they have tried the case and reached a verdict on every aspect."

So it had, and none of the commission members wanted to tangle with Hoover. In fact, the FBI didn't even wait for the Warren Commission to get fully organized. Within two weeks after the shooting, it rushed to the Commission a 5-volume report. However, the FBI report said nothing about a documented plot to kill JFK on a visit to Miami on November 18, *five days before Dallas.*

Nine months before the assassination, Miami police chief, the late Walter E. Headley Jr., through undercover cop C. H. Sapp, had managed to infiltrate a white hate group that wanted to kill Kennedy. Not until Detective Sergeant Sapp got the incriminating bug into the group's motel room did the Secret Service act: they canceled a scheduled motorcade from the airport and flew the President to his speaking engagement by helicopter. The plot—according to Headley—involved the taking of a disassembled high-powered rifle into an office building overlooking the parade route and having "someone" picked up at the scene, "just to throw the public off."

In reviewing the Warren Commission's version some years back, *The New Yorker's* astute Washington correspondent Richard Rovere pointed out that *its authors* were never as unanimous as the public was led to believe, and what particularly fascinated him was how often the word "persuasive" appeared within the Report. "In characterizing the evidence on which its single, most important conclusion rested," wrote Rovere in a foreword to Edward Jay Epstein's critique of the Commission ("Inquest," Viking Press, N.Y. 1965), "the strongest word (the staff) could agree upon

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was 'persuasive.' A word they could not agree upon was 'compelling.' "

What is actually even more disturbing about the Warren Commission Report is that it seemed to provide the *modus operandi* for all the other investigations that followed.

Death of a Senator

Consider the death of Robert Francis Kennedy on June 5th, 1968, in the kitchen pantry just off the Main Ballroom in the Hotel Ambassador. The official version would have you believe that Bob Kennedy was killed by a mentally-disturbed but sane Syrian.

It took Los Angeles documentary filmmaker Theodore Charach roughly five years to raise some disturbing questions and two more years to put it all together on a film, titled *The Second Gun*. A working print of the film has been quietly shown around the country for the past year; it's still not finished. Nor is the case itself.

Bob Kennedy's killing is fresher in people's minds than that of his brother. So we may spare the details of the events leading up to his presence in the kitchen, shortly after making his California Primary victory speech, and touch on the salient highlights.

He is making his way through the pantry when, in front of him, the wiry little Syrian pops up, waving his .22 calibre Iver-Johnson, firing off all eight bullets in front of something like 100 spectators. They all see Sirhan shoot; they see the assistant maitre d' (Karl Uecker) and Roosevelt Grier pin Sirhan to the steam-table, wrenching his gun away. And then they see Bob Kennedy, on the floor, shot in the head, dying.

What they didn't see, no matter how they testified, is Kennedy being hit. And that's the pivotal point on which Charach pins his research. Because (1) although eight bullets were fired from Sirhan's gun, at least 10 bullets or fragments were found, and (2) the autopsy by L. A. Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi found that the fatal bullet entered Kennedy's skull, in the back, just below the ear, from a distance of one inch, although Sirhan was observed to be firing from *in front of* Kennedy.

Dr. Noguchi found one fragmented bullet lodged in the brain, and two "bullet-tracks" in the right armpit, almost running parallel. One bullet was lodged at the base of the neck, the other passed through Kennedy, and possibly embedded itself somewhere in the vast recesses of the ceiling. It was never found. All three bullets were fired upwards, from right to left, back to front. He also found a fourth bullet *hole*—in Kennedy's left shoulder pad. Wounded were at least five spectators, each of whom got at least one bullet taken out of them. Police laboratory tests revealed that the bullet that passed through Kennedy's shoulder pad came from a different direction than the bullet that entered his head and body; that bullet was subsequently found, embedded in the wall.

Noguchi found powder burns on the head wound, which meant that the muzzle was held from one to three *inches* away. But according to Karl Uecker and others who had pounded Sirhan to the table, the closest he ever came to Kennedy was from two

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to seven *feet* and from the front. So even if Kennedy had turned around to shake hands with a Puerto Rican busboy, as was brought out in the Sirhan trial, there was no way to account for the space gap between two feet and one inch distance. Sirhan did not get close enough to press the muzzle of his .22 to Kennedy's head.

Now, Noguchi's autopsy was confirmed by DeWayne Wolfer, the acting Director of the LAPD Crime Lab. A most inconvenient thing to have done, it turns out, because the prosecution wanted a conviction, and L.A. Chief of Detectives Robert Houghton wanted to make sure that this would not be a replay of Dallas. This time, Houghton vowed, he would not make it easy for "the clever people who stand by to profit from the cry of 'conspiracy' to hook their theories to journalistic wagons before the Arlington soil is trampled."

Nevertheless, DeWayne Wolfer either mixed up, lost or destroyed the alleged murder weapon. The I-J .22 listed as the murder weapon at Sirhan's trial (Exhibit #55) carried the serial number H-18602. It turned out to be the Lab's test gun which, a year later, was reported to have been accidentally destroyed by the LAPD. And vital spectrographic evidence that ordinarily would have linked the Sirhan bullets to the fragments lodged in Kennedy's brain were "misplaced" when DeWayne Wolfer was moving his desk.

By 1970, at which point the Sirhan case had been closed for a year and the accused assassin safely tucked away, Ted Charach tracked down William H. Harper. Harper is a highly-respected ballistic expert, consultant to the Pasadena Police Department, and has followed the Sirhan trial closely. Harper is also the co-inventor of a unique microscopic testing device called the Balliscan camera, which finds tell-tale signs that ordinary spectrographic techniques often miss. It didn't take him long to find a wealth of discrepancies in the official LAPD ballistics report. For example, Exhibit #54, the bullet removed from the abdomen of bystander William Weisel, did not match Exhibit #47, the bullet that was lodged in Kennedy's neck. Clearly, there is proof of a second gun.

It was newsman Don Schulman who told Charach about "Thane Eugenio Cesar," a security guard. Apparently, the Ambassador Hotel claimed to have been short of security help that night, so a call was made to the Ace Security Guard Company of Van Nuys to send over a man. Assistant maitre 'd Karl Uecker does not remember making such a call. The Hotel shows no record of such a request ever having been made. Now, with Harper's conclusion in mind, Charach tried to find Mr. Cesar. He did. The guard said he had no use for the Kennedys. "I voted for Wallace in the Primary," he said, "because Kennedy wanted to shove them minority groups down our throat. When somebody does that, you either vote him out or take things into your own hands." Cesar discussed the night at the Ambassador. He was standing slightly behind and to the right of the Senator as he walked through the pantry.

Did Cesar ever own a .22? Yes, he did, he told Charach, but he sold the gun. When? "Oh, back in February of '68, to somebody in the midwest, for

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fifteen bucks. It turns out that the man to whom Cesar sold the gun reported it stolen, and in reporting the loss to the police, Charach learned, he turned over a bill of sale, acknowledging the $15 price. But the date read: September 1968—three months *after* the killing, seven months after Cesar said he sold the gun.

Another witness in the pantry that day was Richard Lubic, an independent TV producer. In a recent newspaper interview, Lubic said he dropped to the floor when the shooting started, and Kennedy fell at his feet. "As I was on the floor, looking to my left and in back of me," he was quoted as saying, "I saw another gun. The gun was pointed in a downward position and it was held by a guy in an Ace Guard uniform. I didn't see him shoot."

Those who claim to be conversant with the L.A. underworld now say that Cesar at one time worked as a security guard in Las Vegas; some say they have run into him at La Costa, the spa near San Diego that was developed with Syndicate money by Moe Dalitz, a Lansky associate. If so, Cesar's not around to ask. After *Harper's* Magazine published an article on The Second Gun this past January, Cesar disappeared.

Looking back, then, we see some curious patterns emerge—and some new theories that are certainly worth investigating.

The fact remains, as one assassinologist put it recently, that "the last three elections in this country were decided by bullets, not ballots."

Consider this:

John F. Kennedy is killed in Dallas and is succeeded by Lyndon B. Johnson, who is then elected on his own with an unprecedented landslide plurality of 15 million votes. But before he can run for his second term, he announces his abdication. Four days later, Dr. Martin Luther King is killed, setting off riots in the urban ghettoes, where the leading Democratic contender, Robert F. Kennedy, is forging his unlikely coalition of white liberals, angry blacks and hard hats. The mantle falls to Hubert H. Humphrey after Bobby is killed, and the law-and-order candidate, Richard M. Nixon, squeeks by Humphrey, who cannot shake off the Vietnam albatross inherited from LBJ. Four years later, Nixon's only viable threat, the unlikely combination of George McGovern and George Wallace voters, is conveniently removed at a Maryland shopping center.

No wonder the Assassination Movement has become a Children's Crusade, similar to the one that started on the college campuses and helped pry us out of the Asian quagmire.

The people who are now leading the protest, who are agitating the loudest for a reopening of the Dallas case, also happen to be the most alienated of our voters. They are now so suspicious of governmental institutions that we may very well be in for a long succession of minority presidents. During the '74 Congressional campaign, after plumping so hard to reduce the voting age, only 21 percent of the newly eligible 18- to 20-year-olds bothered to vote.

As the Assassination Information Bureau puts it in its best Bicentennialese: "An elemental cleansing of the political process is an essential first step if the people in the U.S. are to have any chance of re-establishing the rule of law in a country that now seems incapable of coping with economic recession, domestic repression and foreign entanglements."

Or as one 24-year-old assassination activist put it, in proper English, "let's cut out the Bicentennial bullshit until you tell us who killed JFK. Because we don't believe what we've been told so far. The official versions of what happened don't fit the events. And if we can't get at the truth, then at least we'll know that the American Dream is actually a nightmare." ■

PATHOLOGISTS CALL FOR INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ALL JFK ASSASSINATION EVIDENCE

The Warren Commission came to the conclusion that since a sluggish, bolt-action rifle could not be reloaded, reaimed and fired twice in less than two and one-half seconds, that the wounding of both the President and Governor Connally in less than that period of time had to be accounted for with one bullet. If this "single bullet" theory is therefore disproved, the conclusion must be drawn that more than one person was firing at the Presidential motorcade on November 22, 1963.

Three major criticisms of the single bullet theory have been made by Dr. Cyril Wecht, Coroner of Allegheny County, and the first forensic pathologist outside the government to be allowed access to any autopsy evidence.

1. The "single bullet," Commission Exhibit 399, is said to have entered the right side of the President's back, exited from the midline of his anterior neck at the level of the knot of his tie, and then entered the right side of Governor Connally's back, there to break a rib, exit from the Governor's right chest, enter his right wrist to shatter the distal radius, and finally exit the wrist and enter his left thigh. Yet that same bullet, which in its pristine condition would weigh from 161 to 161.5 grains, weighed 159 grains when recovered. "An experienced forensic pathologist would expect a bullet that had done all this to have had a loss of substance much in excess of 1.5 percent," Wecht says.

2. The upper two-thirds of the three-cm.-long bullet show no grossly visible deformities. "This is not the appearance of a bullet that has struck and fractured two bones, particularly the wrist bone," Wecht says.

3. If the single bullet came from the sixth floor of the Depository, as the Commission said, it would have had to come at an angle of about 10 degrees from the right, as well as from above and behind the President. This means that the bullet entering Kennedy's back would have had to take a sharp upward angle to exit his neck, and then, after leaving his body, would have had to make an acute angular turn in midair, around the left-side of the President's tie, go back toward the right, and enter the Governor's back on the far right side.

What is the evidence for the "single bullet" theory? According to Wecht, the President's back/throat wound was never tracked during the autopsy to determine the route the bullet took through his body—something the pathologist deems "incomprehensible." Furthermore, although recently released FBI Laboratory papers have hinted that specialized neutron activation analysis of the bullet fragments was made—an analysis which could establish whether the composition of the fragment taken from Connally's wrist differed from that of CE 399 or any of the other fragments—these results have not been released. Finally, tissue slides made during the President's autopsy, which might determine whether the wounds were wounds of entrance, have disappeared along with the President's brain (which, by the way, was also never sectioned after the autopsy to track the bullet path).

At a recent press conference, Wecht and two other eminent forensic scientists—Dr. Robert Joling, current president of the Academy of Forensic Sciences, and Professor Herbert MacDonnell, professor of Criminalistics at Elmira College in New York—presented a resolution signed by four former Presidents of the Academy calling for full disclosure of all the medical and scientific evidence in the assassination. They also called for the appointment of an *independent panel of forensic scientists* to review this evidence for public disclosure.

If the Warren Commission's conclusions are correct, the evidence could only put to rest any lingering suspicions about the assassination.